

**GENDER AND AGE EFFECTS ON LEXICAL CHOICE IN
THE BAGHDADI SPEECH COMMUNITY: A COGNITIVE
SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

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Abstrak

Kesan jantina dan umur pada pilihan leksikal dalam sosiolinguistik bahasa Arab didapati bercanggah dan bermasalah. Ini adalah kerana dialek berprestij tidak semestinya jenis standard, atau Arab Baku (SA), dalam dunia Arab. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidik unsur-unsur dalaman system linguistik Baghdadi dalam usaha mencapai persefahaman yang lebih baik antara muka di antara sosial dan linguistic dengan menambah pendekatan kognitif. Pendekatan kognitif dalam pilihan leksikal memberi tumpuan kepada makna subjektif atau pengalaman pengguna bahasa individu dalam lingkungan social mereka. Kajian kuantitatif ini dibuat berdasarkan perbezaan dalam pilihan leksikal yang bergantung kepada jantina dan umur di kalangan Baghdadi yang celik huruf. Corak pemboleh ubah leksikal dikenal pasti mengikut pilihan lelaki/perempuan (24 orang lelaki/24 orang perempuan) terhadap item leksikal baru penutur Dialek Baghdadi (BD). Kajian ini juga mengenal pasti apa-apa corak perubahan berdasarkan tiga kumpulan umur (18-24, 30-40, dan 50-60) dengan membandingkan pilihan leksikal mereka. Informan telah dipilih melalui prosedur persampelan penilaian. Pertuturan 48 orang penutur BD telah diteliti dengan menggunakan temu duga bersemuka. Korelasi dan ujian-F telah dikendalikan dengan menggunakan SPSS (Versi 18) untuk memproses data mengenai pemboleh ubah bebas (umur dan jantina) dan pilihan leksikal. Kajian memperlihatkan bahawa variasi tidak berlaku secara mekanikal atau automatik, tetapi berlaku atas pilihan peribadi secara sadar. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa jantina adalah salah satu factor sosial paling penting yang berhubung kait dengan variasi leksikal. Di kalangan wanita Baghdadi, bentuk linguistik yang berprestij didapati berkaitan dengan bahasa Arab Baku. Oleh itu, wanita yang memilih SA diandaikan mewakili guru-guru bahasa Arab yang kompeten kerana dari sudut linguistik, mereka lebih sadar tentang prestij berbanding penutur lelaki. Kajian masa hadapan boleh menganalisis hubungan antara BD dengan SA dan kesannya ke atas pendidikan di sekolah-sekolah Iraq.

Kata kunci: Sosiolinguistik Arab, Pemboleh ubah leksikal, Pendekatan kognitif, Penutur dialek Baghdadi, Pilihan leksikal

Abstract

The effects of gender and age on lexical choice in Arabic sociolinguistics have been found to be contradictory and problematic. This is because the prestigious dialect is not necessarily the standard variety, or Standard Arabic (SA) in the Arab world. The objective of this study is to delve into the inner workings of Baghdadis' linguistic system in pursuit of a better understanding of the interface between the social and the linguistic by adding the cognitive approach. The cognitive approach to lexical choice is primarily interested in the subjective meanings or experiences of individual language users within their social groups. This quantitative research is based on the differences in lexical choices depending on gender and age of the literate Baghdadis. Patterns of lexical variables are identified according to males'/females' (24 males/24 females) choice of new lexical items of the Baghdadi Dialect (BD) speakers. This study also identifies any patterns of change according to three age groups (18-24, 30-40, and 50-60) by comparing their lexical choices. The informants were chosen using judgment sampling procedure. The speech of the 48 BD speakers was investigated using face-to-face interviews. Correlations and F-tests were conducted using the SPSS (Version 18) to process data on the independent variables (age and gender) and lexical choices. It was found that variation is not mechanical or automatic, but is based on personal conscious choices. It was also found that gender is one of the most important social factors correlating with lexical variation. Among Baghdadi women, the prestigious linguistic form was found to be associated with Standard Arabic. Thus, females who opt for SA can be considered to represent competent Arabic teachers since they are linguistically more prestige conscious than males. Future studies can analyze the relationship between BD and SA and its educational impact on Iraqi schools.

Keywords: Arabic sociolinguistics, Lexical variables, Cognitive approach, Baghdadi Dialect speakers, Lexical choices

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| BD | Baghdadi Dialect |
| BSC | Baghdadi Speech Community |
| DARE | Dictionary of American Regional English |
| FMCs | Form-Meaning Connections |
| LR | Linear Regression |
| OT | Optimality Theory |
| SA | Standard Arabic |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| SCLT | Social cognitive learning theory |
| STH | Self-Teaching Hypothesis |
| VR | Variable Rules |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The existence of linguistic differences in a speech community has been clearly shown in linguistic research. It has been widely assumed that linguistic heterogeneity reflects differences in the use of linguistic variants corresponding to social groupings. Therefore, language is not a simple tool of communication used in the same manner by all people in all situations. Language is beyond this since speakers mark their personal history and identity in their speech as well as their socio-cultural, economic and geographical coordinates. Thus, sociolinguistics argues that language exists in a social context and it is the human instinct to establish and maintain social identity.

Sociolinguistics as defined by Schilling-Estes (2006, p. 312) is "the study of language in its social context". Generally, sociolinguistics denotes the study of language as a crucial part of culture and society development. Controversial debates on language and social structure usually focus on the influence of the latter on the communication tool. Labov (1966) argued that any such influence is marginal in terms of the linguistic system as a whole. Labov (1966) pointed out that linguistic rules are quite remote from any social value and social values are attributed to linguistic rules only when there is variation. That means, those aspects of dialectal varieties which show variation can be correlated with non-linguistic factors. In 1966, (Labov) concluded that "in general, linguistic behavior and variations which have social significance can be considered

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